

Protectionist measures in postsecondary Ontario (Canada) TESL

Paul Z. Jambor (Korea University, IFLS: Department of Education, Art & Design)

Published in 2012

Key words: protectionism, TESL, TEFL, TESOL, Korea, Ontario, university rankings, Times Higher Education, QS World, language benchmarks, Canadianism

Introduction

It has been attested that Korean universities are protectionist (Jambor, 2010), however, in the sphere of Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language (TES/FL) at the post secondary level, TESL in Ontario (TESL-ON, 2011) appears to have paved the way to protectionism. While in recent years there has been a relatively sluggish but certain trend for South Korean universities to move away from isolationism and protectionism by opening up toward foreign faculty and thus internationalizing, it would appear that universities in Ontario Canada, in terms of TESL, are moving in the opposite direction.

TESL in Ontario on an inauspicious path

Effectively, even for internationally well qualified ESL instructors (including Canadian citizens) to lecture at a postsecondary institution in the province of Ontario, one has to be TESL Ontario certified. Essentially, Ontario has set itself its own standard that requires ESL instructors to have completed TESL Ontario accredited teacher training programs run exclusively by teacher training institutions within Ontario, with the exception of CERTESL which is run by the University of Saskatchewan (See Appendix 1).

Even those with MAs in TES/FL acquired via tertiary institutions from outside of Ontario, especially from England; the US; Australia (where English is the first official language), are for the most part barred from gaining accreditation by TESL Ontario. That is to say, training programs accredited by TESL Ontario are held to surpass Masters Degree programs lasting 1-2 years in duration. Effectively, those with MA in TES/FL degrees recognized by world renowned universities fail to gain certification by TESL Ontario simply because such accreditation was not awarded by TESL Ontario accredited institutions.

To the contrary, US citizens returning home from teaching EFL abroad with MAs in TES/FL; TESOL are generally hired by American universities to teach ESL to their international students without the need for supplementary certification. This is certainly the case with regard to several

university lecturers returning to the US from as little as a year of teaching at a South Korean university.

With the specific aim of defending their protectionist stance, TESL Ontario, is inclined to point out that not every world renowned program provides sufficient supervised practice teaching sessions (SPTS), however, even those programs which do offer lengthy SPTS fail to gain accreditation based on the premise that such training was not conducted in classrooms within Canada and this prevents lecturers from demonstrating their knowledge of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB, 2011).

While Canadian English has evolved in its own right, even if much to the influence of American English, it is somewhat of a condescending stance for Ontario TESL providers/institutions, to hold the Canadian variety of English at arm's length from all other varieties in boldly proclaiming that the Canadian Language Benchmarks are essential given that the Canadian variety is significantly unique in its own right.

TES/FL in itself is a huge industry worldwide and the government of Ontario has publicly and openly set up a non-tariff protectionist barrier, by enforcing its own TESL Ontario standards, effectively going against internationally accepted open market principles in creating superfluous obstacles that prevent a multinational workforce from transcending international boundaries in the free spirit of globalization. This kind of measure goes a long way in stagnating the TESL industry in Ontario. What is more, for a country that boasts free market policies, this kind of protectionist behaviour appears paradoxical at best.

South Korea on the path to meeting international standards of TEFL

Unlike in Ontario, Canada, in South Korea learners learn English as a foreign language as opposed to a second language. Aside from this obvious difference, in line with the Ontario model, Korean universities, following the American model, have been moving toward hiring better qualified EFL instructors from countries where English is the first official language in recent years. What is more, South Korean universities are more than willing to hire returning expat university lecturers provided that they are amply qualified on an internationally accepted level with no unilateral protectionist measures set up to keep them out of work, even in the field of TEFL.

Overall, with the exception of ethnic exclusivism and pay discrepancies regarding foreigner salaries at even a number of top Korean universities, South Korean higher education provides a reasonably comfortable working environment for foreign faculty.

As a superb example of South Korean success, Pohang University of Science and Technology (POSTECH) has recently gained an internationally prominent reputation, ranking 28th and 53rd in the world - in 2010 and 2011 respectively - according to Times Higher Education (THE, 2010 &

2011). The gains can in large part be attributed to POSTECH's global attitude and its increasing willingness to hire multinational faculty (McNeill, 2011: a & b).

On the contrary, the gains and strides that universities in Ontario have so painstakingly achieved in terms of their international rankings are at escalating threat should the above mentioned protectionist practices persist and spill over into non-ESL related fields. Effectively, it would lead to a steady decline in post secondary education in Ontario in terms of its international reputation, thus the international rankings of universities located within the province. That is, with 40% of the QS World University Rankings being based on 'Academic Reputation – Global Survey' (QS, 2011) and with 15% (in teaching) and 19.5% (in research) of the Times Higher Education Methodology based on 'Reputational Surveys' (THE-MET, 2010), an institution's reputation is undoubtedly expected to directly influence its international ranking. Hence, the more unfavourable the international reputation of a particular university or a group of universities by region/country of association, it is generally expected that the corresponding global rankings would likewise be subsequently unfavourable. For this reason, universities in Ontario, may essentially pay the price.

All things considered, the glass 'cathedral effect' (Jambor, nd.) of universities puts their every shortcoming on unhindered public display to be viewed by an audience of scholars, in particular those being surveyed by QS and THE, worldwide.

Conclusion

When all's said and done, while Korean universities are inching, but surely heading in a desirable direction, away from insularism and toward internationalism, Canadian universities - at least in the field of ESL- are well on an inauspicious path. Consequently, Canadian universities have much to learn from South Korean universities in the field of TES/FL.

References

- CCLB [2011] 'Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks' [Online] Available at: <http://www.language.ca/> (Accessed on September 17, 2011)
- Jambor [nd.] 'Your Complete Resources on Education in South Korea: A Critical Approach – University Education in South Korea' [Online] Available at: <https://sites.google.com/site/southkoreaneducation/home/university-education-in-south-korea> (Accessed on September 14, 2011)
- Jambor, P. Z. [2010] 'Protectionism in South Korean Universities', Academic Leadership, Volume 8 Issue 2, Spring 2010 [Online] Available at: http://www.academicleadership.org/article/Protectionism_in_South_Korean_Universities
- McNeill, D. [2011:a] 'To Raise Its Global Profile, a Korean U. Shakes Up Its Campus', The Chronicle of Higher Education, January 5, 2011 [Online] Available at: <http://chronicle.com/article/To-Raise-Its-Global-Profile-a/125806/>
- McNeill, D. [2011:b] 'South Korea Brings in Foreign Professors by the Thousands, but Is It Ready for Them?', February 27, 2011 [Online] Available at: <http://chronicle.com/article/South-Korea-Brings-in-Foreign/126508/>
- QS [2011] 'QS World University Rankings – 2011-2012: Methodology' [Online] Available at: <http://iu.qs.com/projects-and-services/world-university-rankings/> (Accessed on October 10, 2011)
- TESL-ON [2011] 'TESL Ontario', Homepage [Online] Available at: <http://www.teslontario.org/> (Accessed on September 7, 2011)
- TESL-REG [2011] 'Accredited TESL Training Institutions', TESL Ontario [Online] Available at: <http://www.teslontario.org/uploads/accreditation/Institutions/AccreditedInstitutions.pdf> (Accessed on September 17, 2011)
- THE [2010 & 2011] 'Times Higher Education – World University Rankings 2010 & 2011' [Online] Available at: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/> (Accessed on November 17, 2011)
- THE-MET [2010] 'Times Higher Education – World University Ranking 2010: Methodology' [Online] Available at: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2010-2011/analysis-methodology.html> (Accessed on September 17, 2011)

Appendix 1**Accredited TESL Training Institutions**

Universities		
Institution	Program/s Recognized	Recognized Since
Brock University, St. Catharines CTESL program/Honours BA in Linguistics, TESL stream	ON SITE	March 2011
Carleton University, Ottawa CTESL Program	ON SITE	September 2000
Carleton University, Ottawa, MA in Applied Linguistics	ON SITE	September 2000
University of Saskatchewan: CERTESL, distance education N.B. The University of Saskatchewan requires that students arrange for their own practicum hours (30 hours of observation and 20 hours of supervised practice teaching)	ONLINE	September 2000
University of Toronto, Woodsworth College, Toronto	ON SITE	September 2000
York University, Toronto	ON SITE	September 2003

Colleges		
Institution	Program/s Recognized	Recognized Since
Algonquin College, Ottawa	ON SITE	September 2000
Centennial College, Toronto, regular evening and weekend format & intensive Friday through Sunday format	ON SITE	October 2006
Conestoga College, Kitchener	ON SITE ON LINE	September 2000 September 2006
Fanshawe College, London	ON SITE	September 2009
George Brown College, Toronto	ON SITE	November 2000
Humber College, Etobicoke	ON SITE	November 2000
Seneca College, English Language Inst. Toronto, 2 courses 317 & 321 (Full Time)	ON SITE	May 2002
Seneca College, Faculty of Continuing Education Training, (Part Time) Toronto	ON SITE	May 2002

School Boards		
Institution	Program/s Recognized	Recognized Since
Niagara Catholic District School Board, St. Catharines	ON SITE	June 2010
Toronto District School Board, Toronto	ON SITE	August 2006
York Catholic District School Board, Aurora This Program offers only the practicum component currently.	ON SITE	January 2004

Private Career Colleges		
Institution	Program/s Recognized	Recognized Since
Canadian College of Educators, Mississauga	ON SITE	February 2007
Canadian Centre for Language & Cultural Studies (CCLCS), Toronto	ON SITE	September 2000